

Sermon for: Trinity Lutheran Church, Manilla

Third Week after the Epiphany—Saturday, January 20, 2024

Sermon Text: John 1:43-51 (Gospel reading for Second Week after the Epiphany)

Sermon Title/Theme: “Come and See!”

“Come and see” says one family member to another, inviting others to look out the window at the cardinal in the tree or the deer in the field.

“Come and see” says the little child to the parent or grandparent, inviting them to see the latest Lego creation or artistic masterpiece.

“Come and see” said Philip to Nathanael in today’s Epiphany Gospel reading, inviting his friend to come and see the Messiah.

“Come and see” is Jesus’ continuing invitation to us, and our mission invitation to others.

Part 1. “Come and see,” Philip and Nathanael,

Having invited brothers James and John, Peter and Andrew, to become “fishers of men,” Jesus continues to assemble His team of disciples. Jesus next calls Philip. Like Peter and Andrew, Philip was from the town of Bethsaida. Most likely, the three residents of the same community had all been disciples of John the Baptist. From mentor John, they had heard much about the promised Messiah and been introduced to the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Philip sees and follows Jesus. Now Philip invites his friend to “come and see.” The encounter leads to several revelations about Jesus.

“Come and see” the all-knowing One. Nathanael is surprised by Jesus’ familiarity of him. Jesus knows that Nathanael is a fellow Israelite. Jesus knew of the interactions with Philip. Jesus

knew everything about Nathanael. Jesus knew Nathanael's prejudices, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Jesus knew everything about Nathanael, and yet He calls him to be his disciple.

How humbling and convicting to know that Jesus knows everything about you and me. He knows our every sinful thought and desire. He knows our past. He knows our present. He knows of our pride and our prejudices, and yet He calls. He called Nathanael and He calls us. We are comforted that Jesus knows our every need.

"Come and see" the fulfillment of Scriptures. Philip's introduction included, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and about whom the prophet also wrote, Jesus of Nazareth." As faithful Jews, these men knew the Old Testament. The whole Old Testament from the first promise to Adam and Eve, the selection of Abraham's family as the one through whom the whole earth would be blessed, the promise of a greater King who would come through the family of King David, the preservation of the remnant through the captivity, and every other detail was meant to point to the coming of the Savior.

The Fulfillment of God's plan was standing before Phillip, Nathanael, the people of Israel, and all people. Nathanael's response, "You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel" was only a glimpse of what he would see. The disciples would continue to "come and see" the miracles of Jesus and the further revelation that He was truly the Son of God. They would see Jesus rejected by the scribes and Pharisees. They would see Jesus crucified on the cross and laid in the tomb. They would see that Jesus was risen from the dead.

The disciples' coming and seeing Jesus would lead to an adventurous three years. After those three years, they would hear Jesus' commission to "go and make disciples of all nations." They would go and share the reality of the resurrection. Ultimately they would die as martyrs. However the journey would have more than earthly adventures and consequences.

"Come and see" your salvation. Jesus promised, "You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Those who in faith see Jesus will see Him on His throne of glory. They will be with Him eternally.

One friend was trying to describe her new home to another friend. She tried to describe the different rooms and features. Finally she said, "You'll just have to come and see it for yourself."

Jesus' call to Nathanael invites him and all followers to see it for ourselves. Our Savior who by His death and resurrection opened heaven for us, now invites us to see for ourselves the reality of His victory.

Part 2. "Come and see" Jesus

Jesus in His grace has invited us to follow Him; to "come and see." The One who appeared in person in Galilee, appears in the waters of Holy Baptism. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and in splash of the water, we in faith see and receive the reality of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Like Philip and Nathanael who saw more in their journey with Jesus, we too are invited to see beyond the baptismal font. We are invited to see into the pages of Scripture. We are invited to

see Jesus in the Word. We are invited to see and receive the body and blood of Jesus at His Table.

The Epiphany season is the season of revelation. It is the season where through the miracles and teachings of Jesus, we see that He truly is the Son of God and Savior of the world. Every time we gather together in worship, we have the privilege of seeing more of Jesus.

In the routines of our life, we receive many direct and indirect invitations: come and see the game, the concert, the television program, the beauty of nature, . . . The most important invitation is to come and see Jesus for only in Him do we find salvation and all the blessings that come with that. Come and see the Light, the Peace, the Hope, the Comfort, . . . that come through Jesus.

Part 3. "Come and see" is our invitation to others.

"Come and see!" We began with examples of the joy and excitement of seeing the beauty of nature or some man-made and hand-made creations.

With great joy and greater impact, as followers of Jesus, we share, "Come and see, Jesus!" Like Philip invited Nathanael to "come and see" Jesus, as Jesus' followers we are privileged to invite others. YOU are the most personal and effective witness to your family, friends, and this community.

Surveys have been done asking people, "Why did you join a particular church?" "What prompted you to come?" Consistently the survey results reveal:

- 2-3% join because of a special introductory event or ministry (vacation Bible school, etc.)

- 4-5% join through a Sunday school, youth ministry, pre-school, or other church program.
- 5-6 % join because of a contact with or visit from the Pastor
- 75-90% join because of friend or relative who is a member of the church inviting them to come.

Another survey indicated that the average church member has at least four family members or friends who are functionally unchurched. The mission field is around US.

God-willing this week, Mike, Jason, and Pastor Conner will be traveling to St Louis to interview potential candidates to be pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church. They will ask the candidates about their worship and preaching style and preferences. They will ask about their thoughts on member and community contact and visitation. Imagine the candidates asking your representatives: Have the members of Trinity heard Jesus say, "Follow me" and are they followed faithfully in worship? Are they excited about their church and its future? Are they willing to invite their friends and neighbors to "Come and see"?

It will be the privilege of the next Pastor of Trinity to be a "Philip" who invites you to see Jesus week after week in the sanctuary of Trinity. Until that time, that will be my, Pastor Vogel, and Pastor Conner's privilege to introduce you to Jesus. Come and see your Savior and Friend!

Then, I pray that YOU might also be "Philips" who go out to the seeking and questioning Nathanael's in your family and neighborhood so that they too may also see "great things" now and see "heaven opened." God grant that for Jesus' sake. Amen.